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[May, 1935.

ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE : PROCEEDINGS.

Africa, North.

Caton-Thompson.

A Revision of Recent Research upon some Stone-Age Problems in North Africa. *Summary of the Rivers Lectures by G. Caton-Thompson and illustrated by lantern slides, 9th April, 1935.*

75 The prehistory of Kharga Oasis as established by three seasons' field work in the northern area, to be continued southwards, is used as a base from which to explore other current prehistoric problems in North Africa.

The position of the oasis in the eastern, most arid, part of the African desert belt, endows it with special value for determining increases of Pleistocene moisture, free from fluvial influences. Early Quaternary deposits of extreme aridity are noted. Nor does the distribution of flint tools suggest that, even in the Middle Palaeolithic maximum of moisture, man's movements were unfettered by abundant rainwater. On the depression floor, implements hung, even in that epoch, to the two areas of artesian mound-springs; elsewhere they are absent or scarce. Likewise on the scarp, tools crowd only in the localized regions of travertine formation, deposited largely by springs and seepage from the junction of an impermeable shale bed underlying the plateau limestone, in part by surface drainage. Nature's subterranean waterworks thus play a large part in prehistoric supply. Hence groups of surface implements found at points in the Libyan Desert and Sahara, days from water, demand investigation. Motoring and other parties who collect such tools without plotting their position, and rendering an account of the local hydrography (mound-springs may be denuded to desert level, and recognised by digging only) destroy evidence of untold potential value. Mound-springs seem certainly to occur in French North Africa.

The Upper Acheulean exhibits non-local peculiarities which link with Palestine (Umm el Qatafa and level F. at Tabdin), and less strongly with assemblages from Tebessa. Nothing comparable is yet recorded from the Nile Valley, possibly owing to insufficient work.

An Acheuléo-Levallois phase is succeeded by two or three different facies of Levalloisian, whose relative position *inter se* is undetermined. Physiographical evidence for the age of Kharga Aterian culture assigns it to oncoming aridity, used as a convenient datum for Upper Palaeolithic distinction. Its typology suggests an archaic aspect, where tanged points are scarce, and the tanged end-scrapers and diminution in size which mark many Aterian groups in French N. Africa are absent.

Vaufrey's evidence for the relegation of Capsian culture to final Palaeolithic or Mesolithic times, will, if fully accepted, force a revision of ideas concerning Aurignacian origins in Western Europe and Kenya, and re-orient conceptions of authorship and date of desert pictographs.

The juxtaposition of Aterian and Ibéromaurian at north-westerly sites seems to indicate the survival of a debased Aterian into very 'late' times. Evidence for this is lacking in Kharga, but is inherently probable.

The creation of Aterian types by means of 'culture-contact' with a blade and burin group, often adduced also to explain Stillbay, Bambata and Sebilian eccentricities, will hardly bear examination in view of the apparent absence of a contemporary Capsian culture. Independently of this consideration, inherited tradition from the Upper Acheulean may, in Kharga, be more reasonably invoked. The Kharga Aterian is succeeded, unconformably, by a blade culture of Capsian affinities with microliths, querns, but no pottery. In spite of the presence of small uni- and bifacial tanged arrow-heads and leaf-shaped points, usually regarded as Neolithic farther west, it seems likely the period is Mesolithic, for it develops at other sites into a true Neolithic by the addition of axes, large concave-base arrow-heads of the Fayum A group, a macrolithic tool-bag and scrapers of pottery—all absent in the presumed Capso-mesolithic earlier group. It seems probable that later Aterian groups, yet to be discovered, will bridge the gap without further intermediary stages.

Notes on Red Feather Money from Santa Cruz, New Hebrides. *Summary of a communication presented by H. G. Beasley, 30th April, 1935.*

76 The first notice of this form of currency was by Codrington in 1891, since when some fourteen other writers have briefly recorded a few inaccurate notes. One writer states that they are war belts, and all copy Codrington in stating that the red feathers, which are an essential

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